

Change of perspective II

Reflections on our visitor from Gambia in June 2023

From Regine Ritsert-Dettmar & Uwe Dettmar

Our guest from Gambia, Alagie, stayed with us for 10 days in June while he attended the preparatory conference in Bonn for the next World Climate Conference in Dubai 2024. Some members of our local branch of Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen (Green party) and friends had the opportunity to meet him with us. He accompanied us to concerts, celebrations, and events. He was very happy about that.

It was an impressive time with many intensive conversations about the cultures of our two countries, the everyday life, and the attitude towards life of the people and especially again and again the climate and environmental problems.

The Gambia is located in West Africa and is completely surrounded by Senegal. The sea coast to the Atlantic Ocean is a comparatively narrow stretch. Many families live from fishing.

Alagie described the massive impact on life in The Gambia of large Chinese fish trawlers that fish the coast of The Gambia with trawl nets at night, very close to the seacoast. These nets have such small meshes so the baby fish get caught in the net, which is illegal. As a result, the fish population is declining massively and the families can hardly support themselves, let alone sell fish.

Alagie complained that his country is suffering particularly severely from climate change due to storms, heavy rain, floods, and drought, although Gambia itself has very low CO2 emissions. Hardly anyone there uses refrigerators; his large family has never had a refrigerator. A dishwasher or washing machine was new to him. Heating is not an issue. He campaigns for environmental and climate issues with his weekly TV show and talk shows.

The freedom of the media in our countries and his caution about what he publicly represents in The Gambia and where he has to be careful were also recurring topics.

We still think of our guest often and are very happy about the personal level of the encounters, which always makes us feel directly how important it is to stand up globally for the world climate on a large scale and just as directly on our doorstep - and that every step counts.